

Ohio's Response to the Increase in Spanish Speaking Populations:
A Grassroots Movement in Education

A Senior Honors Thesis

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	p. 3
Introduction.....	p. 4
The Symposium.....	p. 8
Statement of Independence...	p. 10
Purpose.....	p. 10
Hypothesis.....	p. 10
Methodology.....	p. 10
Results.....	p. 11
Conclusion.....	p. 14
Discussion.....	p. 14
Significance.....	p. 17
Notes.....	p. 18

Appendix 1: 2004-2005 Data regarding the Status of the Ohio Academic Achievement Gap (Source: Ohio Department of Education)

Appendix 2: Recruitment Letter

Appendix 3: Survey Instrument

Appendix 4: Results

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Introduction¹

The 2000 U.S. Census results named Hispanics as the largest minority nationwide with a 58% growth rate between 1990 and 2000. Between these same years the Hispanic population in Ohio grew from 139,696 to 217,123, an increase of 55.4%. The Hispanic populations in four Ohio counties--Cuyahoga, Franklin, Lorain, and Lucas--comprise 51.4% of the total Ohio Hispanic population (see Table 1) but others areas, such as Hamilton County, are experiencing rapid growth² (see Map). The Hispanic populations of Cuyahoga and Lorain Counties Puerto Rican majority while the Hispanic populations of Franklin and Lucas counties are densely populated by Mexicans. Despite the high concentrations of these two nationalities in the four counties listed, the Hispanic populations are relatively diverse (see Table 2). The Hispanic populations of these counties are also relatively young, as at least 30% of each county's population is under the age of 18 (see Table 3).³ The high diversity and low ages are characteristic of most of the Hispanic populations statewide.⁴

Table 1- Increase in Hispanic Population between 1990 and 2000 Census

County	Cuyahoga		Franklin		Lorain		Lucas	
Year	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Total Population	1,412,140	1,393,978	961,437	1,068,978	271,126	284,664	462,361	455,054
Hispanic	31,447	47,078	9,236	24,279	15,261	19,676	15,658	20,670
Percent	2.2	3.4	1.0	2.3	5.6	6.9	3.4	4.5

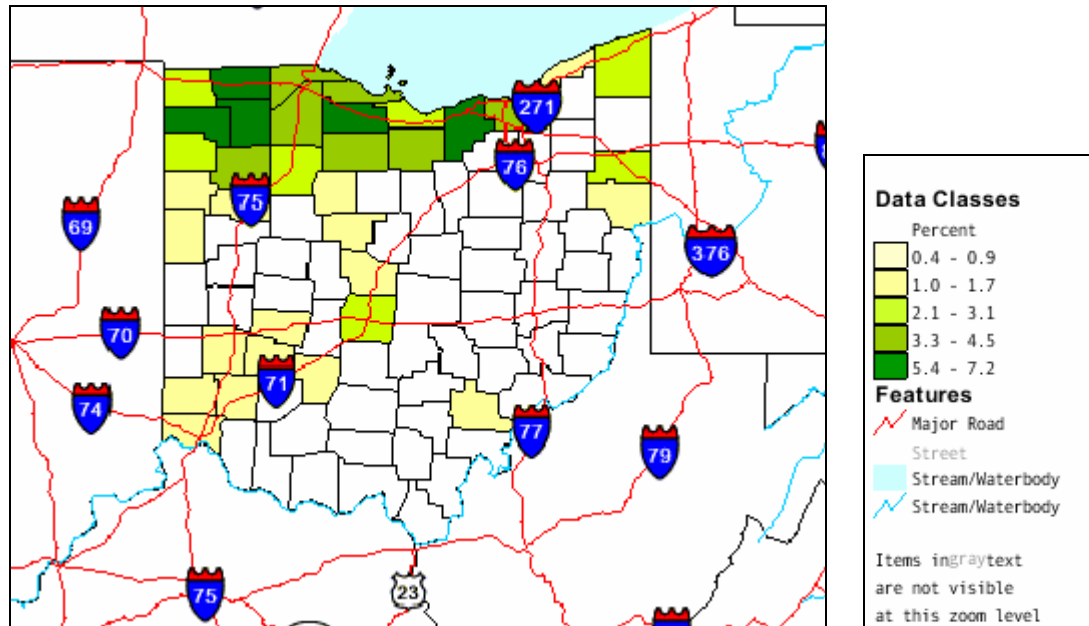
Table 2- Breakdown by Nationality

County, 2000	Cuyahoga	Franklin	Lorain	Lucas
Total Hispanic	47,078	24,279	19,676	20,670
Mexican	5,961	12,005	3,923	15,913
Puerto Rican	30,147	3,624	13,273	917
Dominican	658	436	Not collected	Not collected
Cuban	1,016	888	140	235
Central American	1,684	1,329	127	197
South American	1,664	1,463	195	286
All other	5,774	4,406	1,887	3,062

Table 3- Breakdown by Age

County, 2000	Cuyahoga	Franklin	Lorain	Lucas
Total Hispanics	47,078	24,279	19,676	20,670
Hispanics > 18	29,272	16,732	11,980	11,927
Hispanics < 18	17,806	7,547	7,696	8,743
Percent < 18	37.8	31.1	39.1	42.3

Ohio Hispanic/Latino Population by County in 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Linguistically, 132,635 Ohio households are Spanish speaking; 49,364 Ohioans between the ages of 5 and 17 years of age speak Spanish;^{a5} and 163,783 over 18 years of age speak Spanish. Compared to other languages spoken in Ohio Spanish is the most common after English. The majority of Spanish speakers can speak English “very well” or “well” but a large number of them have weak English language skills (see Table 4). There is also a large disparity for English speaking ability between U.S. born Hispanics and foreign born Hispanics (see Table 5).⁶ Ezra Escudero commented that there is a general consensus that the 2000 Census data does

not accurately depict the Hispanic/Latino growth of Ohio because the numbers are actually higher. He also added that work is being done in Ohio to find more accurate numbers⁷.

Table 4-Language Spoken at Home by the Ability to Speak English for the Hispanic/Latino Population 5 Years and Over

	Ohio
Total:	189,238
Speak only English	82,049
Speak Spanish:	105,417
Speak English "very well"	61,566
Speak English "well"	21,675
Speak English "not well"	15,808
Speak English "not at all"	6,368
Speak other language	1,772

Table 5-Nativity by Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Older

Ohio	Native Born	Foreign Born
Total	10,266,697	333,271
Speak only English	9,866,392	85,083
Speak Spanish:	177,876	35,271
Speak English "very well"	122,213 (68.7%)	13,540 (38.4%)
Speak English "well"	29,076 (16.3%)	8,169 (23.2%)
Speak English "not well"	24,674 (13.9%)	8,573 (24.3%)
Speak English "not at all"	1,913 (1.10%)	4,989 (14.1%)

The increase in Hispanic populations and the high number of Spanish speaking Ohioans has had a great impact on social services such as healthcare and education, areas in which a number of volunteer services and organizations have emerged in an effort to provide opportunities to the Hispanic community.⁸ Education has emerged as one of the major concerns of the Hispanic leaders. In 2002 the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs (OCHLA) composed a report called *The Educational Status of Hispanic/Latino students in Ohio's K-12 Public Schools 2001-2002*. This report provided alarming statistics concerning Hispanic education, including the findings that 49% of Hispanics drop out of high school; most Hispanic

students score almost two times below the state average on all levels of state proficiency exams; Hispanic suspension percentage rates are considerably higher than those of non-Hispanic whites in Cleveland, Lorain, and Toledo public schools; and 50% of the state's Limited English Proficient students are Spanish-speaking. It also identified barriers to improving Hispanic education as "poverty, mobility, lack of English fluency" on the students' part and, on the teachers' part, "low expectations and lack of cultural awareness."⁹

Many other states are also experiencing difficulty with academic achievement gaps amongst Hispanics and African Americans and, consequently, in early 2004 the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators and the National Black Caucus of State Legislators completed an information guide to endorse the Closing the Gap Campaign. This guide focuses on improving education for Hispanics and African-Americans in the target states of Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, and Texas. It offers suggestions and guidance to legislators and government officials in these states to increase funding for and improve the quality of public education.¹⁰ As a result of the information contained in both documents and reports on the current education status in Ohio (see Appendix 1), OCHLA began to focus its efforts on improving Hispanic education in Ohio through a grassroots movement. The basis of the grassroots movement education in Ohio is to begin to work together at all levels to make change instead of blaming different aspects of education for being the causes of problems. With this goal in mind, The Ohio State University, the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Board of Regents, the Ohio Council of Urban Leagues, the Ohio Close the Gap Campaign, and members of the Ohio General Assembly formed a partnership to work toward education reforms.¹¹

The Symposium

In early 2005, OCHLA established the Education Campaign Symposia Advisory Committee (ECSAC) composed of community members and representatives of the partner organizations. The objective of this committee is to create a series of conferences and informational sessions that focus on closing the academic achievement gap experienced by Hispanic students. The first idea for an education summit was proposed as one that would “include two tracks – a professional development track for educators and administrators, and a leadership development track targeted for parents and community members, with both audiences participating in an issues-awareness session.”¹² This hopeful idea was dependent on sponsorships by corporations which ultimately were not secured. As a result, ECSAC decided to have a smaller event that would secure participants by invitation and that would function as a “pre-statewide conference ‘preview event’ in a Roundtable format.”¹³ This was to be followed by a statewide education summit in late 2006 or early 2007.

The Soluciones Roundtable event that took place January 28, 2006 at The Ohio State University was the first symposium held by ECSAC. Participants were invited by The Ohio State University, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs. They were also drawn from five key groups: school district superintendents and senior administrators; Hispanic/Latino community leaders; elected officials and public policy makers; experts in education from colleges of education across Ohio; and education experts from across the country.¹⁴ This roundtable was attended by over 100 individuals from all over Ohio and cost \$10,932.90. The objective of this symposium was to raise awareness about the academic achievement gap, the challenges to delivering quality education to Hispanic students, and begin to find solutions (*soluciones* in Spanish) to these challenges. The symposium was also intended to initiate cooperation among the five different levels of educational community identified as (1)

parents & community members; (2) educators and teachers; (3) superintendents and administrators; (4) policy makers & elected officials; and (5) experts in the field of education.¹⁵

The event included a welcome from David Andrews, Dean of the College Education at The Ohio State University; an opening address from Dr. Susan Tave Zelman, Superintendent of the Ohio Department of Education; and a keynote address by Maria Franquiz , Associate Professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio. In addition to these speakers, roundtable discussions were on the following topics: What challenges to closing academic achievement gap for Hispanic/Latino students are you facing in your school district? What solutions are working to close the Latino academic achievement gap? Where can we go from here, both locally and globally, to implement some of the identified solutions to closing the gap? There were also video presentations and student presentations that helped generate ideas for these discussions.

Following the discussion, the participants of the Soluciones Roundtable were challenged to create Local Roundtable Groups in the Ohio regions defined as Northwest, Northeast, South and West, and Central and Southeast.¹⁶ After the Soluciones Roundtable, ECSAC recommended that OCHLA's role in the grassroots movement be directed toward supporting local operations that aim to "unite, educate, and mobilize local teams of parents, teachers, and policy-makers."¹⁷ It was suggested that this support be in the form of visits to local communities, establishing the Soluciones website as a hub of information, providing leadership training for parents and community leaders, making presentations for school administrators, and organizing legislative visit days. It was also acknowledged that a second Soluciones Roundtable should take place to "reconvene the original group and expand it to include some new team members."¹⁸ They hope to use this event to "re-energize, re-evaluate, re-motivate, and re-dedicate"¹⁹ the people they

hope will continue to work hard to close achievement gaps. They also plan to improve fundraising efforts in order to ensure success.²⁰

Statement of Independence

This study was conducted independent of the organizers of the Soluciones Roundtable event and precautions were taken in order to ensure that the confidentiality of the respondents would not be compromised.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Soluciones Roundtable, based on the opinions of the participants.

Hypothesis

Based on the lack of response that OCHLA received from participants of the Soluciones Roundtable with regard to progress that has been made in their communities, it is believed that a number of people feel as if changes to the Soluciones Event and Campaign would be helpful.

Methodology

A list of the people who registered for the event and information about coordinators of local roundtable efforts were obtained. This information provided the names of 83 participants which did not include organizers^{b21} or speakers). These participants of the Soluciones event were to be emailed a letter requesting their participation that contained a link to a survey established at www.surveymonkey.com. The participants were offered the opportunity to win one of three \$25 Speedway gift certificates for completing the survey. On the survey, participants were first asked to state their occupation. The survey questions focused on their

experience during and after the event. The following three questions required a response: How did you hear about the Soluciones Roundtable event? Did the event meet your expectations? Optional questions included: What motivated you to attend this event? Would you attend another event like this in the future? How do you think this event could be more helpful in the future? Participants were asked to elaborate on their responses. Participants were also asked to rate to what extent they agreed with statements such as “Soluciones helped me to form networks in my community” and “After Soluciones I wanted to learn more about the issues that are of concern to the parents in my community.” Other questions were also included but will not be discussed in this report. At the end of the survey participants were asked to send an email if they would like to participate in a 10-20 minute follow-up phone interview to further discuss any concerns surrounding the Soluciones campaign (See Appendix 2 for complete survey). Six of the participants included in this list did not provide an email contact. One of the participants had intended to attend the event but had not been able to attend. The solicitation email was returned for six of the participants. After taking this into account, it was assumed that contact was established by email for 70 participants of the Soluciones event.

Results

Twenty-three people responded to the online survey. The participants self-identified as educators (2), administrators (6), teachers (4), community leaders (2), social workers (2), professors (2), secretary (1), writer (1), admissions recruiter (1), and two people did not respond to this question. Sixty-five percent of the participants were invited and 30 percent of the participants heard about the event from someone else.

When asked about whether or not the event met their expectations 83 percent responded Yes while 17 percent responded No. Positive respondents explained that they appreciated being

able to meet people from a variety of professions and Ohio cities. They also enjoyed learning about how people can work together to resolve the issue of education. Negative respondents indicated that a lot of time was spent defining the problem which was already known and that the focus was too broad.

When asked whether or not they would attend a similar event in the future almost everyone (91 percent) responded Yes. Reasons provided include opportunities for empowering the Ohio Latino community, networking, and learning. Suggestions for improving the event include providing more guidance and information about how to begin a grassroots movement in education, including information sessions on best practices about how to approach the problem in a particular field, and allowing more time for discussion amongst groups.

The majority of the participants responded positively or neutral to all questions asking them to rate their experience after the Soluciones event except for “After Soluciones I have attended more school board meetings.” Eighty-seven percent of the participants reported that they have not experienced any problems with applying the concepts highlighted during the Soluciones event. Those who did experience problems explained that communication failure and lack of reinforcement of the concepts have made it hard for them to apply Soluciones concepts. Additional comments include an expression for the need for more research to be done on the Latino achievement gap because it seems that now it is only perceived to be a black/white issue and the need for more information to be provided to teachers who working with Latino children (See Appendix 3 for more details).

Three people participated in the follow-up phone conversation: one social worker, one education employee, and one university employee. In these phone conversations, a number of concerns and issues were raised. The social worker feels as if each school needs a social worker

to help address the needs of the students because it is hard for students to concentrate at home if they are dealing with problems in the home. This social worker also responded that the direct goals of Soluciones are unclear but it is understood that the campaign wants to improve education. When asked what role the government should have in improving Hispanic education, the response was passing legislation that would provide illegal immigrants who have been in the U.S. for long periods the opportunity to receive scholarships and financial aid to achieve higher education. When asked where the emphasis should be placed in starting a grassroots movement, the response was getting parents involved by going into the communities and talking to parents about the issues. It was noted that some aspects of the Hispanic culture do not encourage Hispanic youth to achieve higher education, most often the roles assigned to women. It is hoped that educating parents and communities about the issues will help increase awareness about the value of education for Hispanics. When asked about problems that could be addressed during road trips, the response was parent-teacher-administration communication issues especially those that arise due to language differences.

The education employee feels as if the grassroots movement in education is very slow moving because of a lack of participation. This education employee feels that the government needs to help raise awareness about the academic achievement gap and conduct more studies about Hispanic students specifically. The belief is that if there were more data and publicity about the problem then there would be more advocacy. In addition to this aspect, the need for teacher professional development to educate teachers on how to serve the needs of this population and the need for Hispanics to serve on education committees to add their perspectives were deemed as very important. This education employee is involved in the Local Roundtable effort with one other person. They are planning an event for October.

The university employee would like to see the religious element be included in this movement because of the great work that they are already doing but is unknown to most Ohioans. This university worker would like to see the government offer more tax-credits and vouchers to support the efforts of the religious community. Political power was cited as the most important aspect of the grassroots movement. Furthermore, it was noted that it needs to be recognized that the Hispanic community is diverse and that one political agenda will not suffice. The fact that OCHLA has provided a neutral space for all Hispanics who are concerned about education was deemed as essential to achieving legislative action.

Conclusions

The majority of the participants of this survey felt some aspect of the event should be changed. A number of the participants felt that some aspects of the event were helpful. The event helped them to learn more about the issues, working together to resolve the issues, and the political process involved in resolving the issues. There are many different opinions on where to go from here but it seems as though an all encompassing approach is needed. The small sample size of this study limits the ability to extend the results of this study beyond the scope of these particular participants and responses.

Discussion

In September and October of 2006 OCHLA plans to visit communities to discuss working on solutions for closing the gap. These visits are intended to provide guidance and direction to the original participants of Soluciones. In March 2007, OCHLA plans to have another Soluciones Roundtable to re-convene the original group and include some others. Based on the responses collected in this study the following is recommended to OCHLA:

- (1) A meeting with superintendents and other school officials should take place before September and October to educate this sector of the movement about the challenges that lie ahead and gain their support of the September/October community visits.
- (2) The community visits that will occur in September and October of this year should primarily be used to rally more support of parents and community members. Parents and community members need to be educated about the issues and learn more about forming solutions.
- (3) The community visits should also bring the original Soluciones participants and others who have been involved with the local effort should provide an opportunity to discuss what has happened in their community since the Soluciones event. It would also be a great opportunity to let the Soluciones participants what progress has been made on behalf of the efforts of OCHLA.
- (4) The event in March of 2007, should be a state-wide conference that is open to the public and includes multiple levels of educational community.
- (5) The event should be structured to include a brief overview of the status of Latino education in Ohio, one guest speaker, workshops that separate the group by profession, and workshops that separate the group by region.
- (6) Workshops should be used to discuss specific plans of action with regard to professions and regions. Information on best practices and cultural sensitivity should be disseminated. Information on what ideas are being

tested in other states and Ohio regions should be disseminated. Discussion sessions should be included in these workshops.

- (7) Information should be disseminated in a manner that allows participants of the event to inform others in their school and regions about the problems and plans of action. This includes handouts with statistical information, best practices, and cultural sensitivity practices. This also includes providing contact information for all participants of the event listed by profession and region.
- (8) After this event, meetings should immediately occur in the communities to organize local efforts.
- (9) It would be most helpful to have the community meetings be of the following nature:
 - Initial meeting to gather the community together to develop special committees and choose leaders of special committees
 - Weekly committee meetings to work toward specific goals
 - Monthly community meetings to update all community members on what progress has been made and what problems have occurred
 - Quarterly regional meetings attended by OCHLA, Ohio Department of Education Representatives, legislative representatives, or guest speakers that allow opportunities for the dissemination of information, revitalization of efforts, networking, and discussion.
- (10) Leadership training should also occur very rapidly after special committees are formed.

These recommendations are based on the general sense that many of the Soluciones Roundtable participants feel overwhelmed with the challenge of starting a grassroots movement in education and feel as if they need additional support. For a grassroots movement in education to be successful there needs to be more participation from the public at a grassroots level and guidance from OCHLA to help the supporters of the movement achieve *soluciones*.

Significance of this Project

Since we live in a nation that places high value on obtaining education in order to advance economically, it is not surprising that one of the major concerns of the Hispanic community is education. Recently, the debate over immigration reform and English Only legislation has brought many issues affecting the Hispanic community to the forefront of American consciousness. While much of the coverage has been focused on border control, there still has been widespread recognition that something must happen to help Hispanics that are already in the U.S. They need help becoming integrated into American society. They need to be encouraged to be proud of their heritage. They need to learn English. Given the large number of young Hispanics in the U.S., it is especially important that advances toward improving education become a priority. A pamphlet published by the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators in July 2003 comments, “Today’s Latino first graders will enter the labor force in the next 12-16 years, between 2015-2019. These are particularly significant years, for at the same time, between 2010-2025, the United States will experience the highest years of White, non-Hispanic ‘Baby Boomer’ retirement. Latino children thus will be a significant percentage of tomorrow’s working adults in a little over a decade²².”

In the information age we live in, it is imperative to find a way to educate tomorrow's workforce. Ohio has recognized the need to make Hispanic students competitive in the Ohio job market and is working toward preparing them for the jobs of the future. OCHLA has played an important part in gaining this recognition. OCHLA plans to continue conferences to address education issues so it is important to know whether or not these symposia are addressing the needs and concerns surrounding Latino education in Ohio and what needs to be changed for them to effectively do so.

¹ This project was approved by the OSU Institutional Review Board for the ability to conduct research with human subjects as project number 2006E0350.

² The Educational Status of Hispanic/Latino students in Ohio's K-12 Public Schools 2001-2002. Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs. 2002.

³ United States. Census Bureau. Census: 1990 and 2000. <<http://www.census.gov/>>

⁴ United States. Census Bureau. Census: 2000. <<http://www.census.gov/>>

⁵ This number includes a number of Spanish Creole which may be defined as any language in which Spanish is mixed with another language but the majority of the words are in Spanish

⁶ United States. Census Bureau. Census: 2000. <<http://www.census.gov/>>

⁷ Information obtained through an interview with Ezra Escudero.

⁸ Information provided by Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs.

⁹ The Educational Status of Hispanic/Latino students in Ohio's K-12 Public Schools 2001-2002. Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs. 2002.

¹⁰ Closing the Gap: A Campaign Action Guide for Improving Educational Outcomes for Children. National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators and the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. 2004.

¹¹ Escudero, Ezra. "Education Campaign Symposia Advisory Committee (ECSAC) & Soluciones Roundtable Report." March 2006.

¹² Escudero, Ezra. "Education Campaign Symposia Advisory Committee (ECSAC) & Soluciones Roundtable Report." p. 3 March 2006.

¹³ Escudero, Ezra. "Education Campaign Symposia Advisory Committee (ECSAC) & Soluciones Roundtable Report." p. 6 March 2006.

¹⁴ Soluciones. 2006. Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs. 19 May 2006 <<http://www.osu.edu/soluciones/>>.

¹⁵ Escudero, Ezra. "Education Campaign Symposia Advisory Committee (ECSAC) & Soluciones Roundtable Report." March 2006.

¹⁶ Escudero, Ezra. "Education Campaign Symposia Advisory Committee (ECSAC) & Soluciones Roundtable Report." March 2006.

¹⁷ Escudero, Ezra. "Education Campaign Symposia Advisory Committee (ECSAC) & Soluciones Roundtable Report." p. 3 March 2006.

¹⁸ Escudero, Ezra. "Education Campaign Symposia Advisory Committee

(ECSAC) & Soluciones Roundtable Report.” p. 3 March 2006.

¹⁹ Escudero, Ezra. “Education Campaign Symposia Advisory Committee (ECSAC) & Soluciones Roundtable Report.” p. 3 March 2006.

²⁰ Escudero, Ezra. “Education Campaign Symposia Advisory Committee (ECSAC) & Soluciones Roundtable Report.” March 2006.

²¹ Two organizers of the event who expressed interest in becoming involved in the local roundtable effort were included in the original sample

²² Closing Achievement Gaps: Improving Educational Outcomes for Hispanic Children. p. 3 National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators: Washington, 2003.